

Top Secret

POLAND: Workers' New Demand

Worker demands for more responsive trade unions apparently have prevented settlement of a week-long labor dispute at a large Polish plant.

According to the eyewitness account of a Western businessman, the workers at the Stalowa Wola construction machinery factory in southeast Poland felt that the 15-percent pay increase offered by the regime was not sufficient justification to go back to work. Workers have raised numerous grievances during the labor unrest that has leapfrogged across Poland since 2 July, but this is the first known instance in which a labor stoppage continued after the wage issue evidently was resolved.

The demand for more responsive trade unions will test party leader Gierek's promise early this year that the unions would play a more prominent role and will be a personal challenge for the new union boss, party Politburo member Szydlak. During the unrest in 1970 and 1976, the regime made a similar promise but reneged on it and bought off the workers with economic concessions instead. The leadership will be concerned that it not give the impression of caving in, since Moscow and others could interpret it as a loss of control of the situation.

Meanwhile, Gierek has arrived in the USSR for a vacation. His coming discussions with President Brezhnev are likely to focus on the Polish labor situation.

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